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AN

ORATION

ON THE

Influence of Moral Causes on National Character,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY,

[AT CAMBRIDGE, MASS.]

ON THEIR ANNIVERSARY, 28 AUG. 1817.

BY WILLIAM CRAFTS, JUN.

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On the "Influence of Moral Causes on National Character,"

DELIVERED BEFORE THE PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY,

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BY

William Crafts, jun.

HE, who should embrace in a single view all the varieties of human being—the shades of civilization, which mark and separate individuals and nations, would recur with surprise to their common origin—and wonder how the descendants of Adam and Eve could undergo such important changes, and exhibit such diversity of aspect. The inanimate world retains, almost entirely, its primitive character—is uniform and stable in its operations—and obedient to the laws, which God imposed on it. The brute creation, with the exception of the influence of climate, manifest in all countries the same instinct, propensities, and appearance. Fragrance may universally be predicated of the rose, innocence of the lamb, and ferocity of the tiger. The planets revolve in their course with beautiful order, and the music of the spheres is perpetual harmony.

Man alone can impair, and throw off, and escape the laws of nature. He alone can overcome the influence of soil and climate—elevate or depress himself—use or abuse his reason—build or destroy his happiness, and by the variety of his metamorphoses defy speculation.

Nations, like individuals, are the arbiters of their own destiny. There is no moral attraction nor gravitation, which controls them in the path of their choice. The Almighty has stamped grandeur on the mountain, and humility on the valley, but he has left the human mind to receive its own impressions, and achieve its own character.

In examining the causes of national greatness—in tracing the operation of those leading principles, which diversify the human species, the American will discover ample ground for self-gratulation, and, as he unfolds the germs of national renown, will triumphantly illustrate them by appeals to the institutions of his native country. Patriotism will prompt the inquiry, and its result will strengthen patriotism.

National character is the offspring of customs, religion and laws. It is not of sudden growth, but like the aloe, requires years to develop it. It arises out of long continued habits of thought and action—pre-supposes firmness and consistency, and cannot be predicated of a people, who are proverbially fickle or frivolous. It designates the sum of power, intelligence, and glory, which a community has acquired, and is the basis of its reputation, and its hopes. It must be earned by those who would enjoy it, and cannot be lost without their consent. Conquest has proved inadequate to alter the character of the conquered, who have not unfrequently redeemed the honors of war, by the nobler triumphs of humanity and letters. The barbarians, who overran Rome, were vanquished by her refinement. Rome fell of her own accord. Persius and Juvenal could not revive the purity of ancient manners, nor the severity of forgotten discipline. They could not exorcise the spirit of luxury, which withered in its embrace, valor and virtue.

In the infancy of society, mankind must have borne an uniform aspect. Where the soil was fertile and the climate genial, the shepherd fed his flocks. Where the barrenness of nature precluded this occupation, the hunter sought in the chase the means of subsistence. On both were stamped the same rude features of barbarous life. Both were savages. Free from the influence of moral causes, with just enough of light for self-preservation, they felt and illustrated the effects of climate; without the desire or ability to overcome them. Strangers to civilization, they were destitute of manners, and exhibited a promiscuous, and spontaneous growth of virtues and vices, the first without cultivation, and the last without restraint.

As men became opulent, laws were instituted for their protection, in the formation of which, something more was requisite, than the rustic arts, by which life had been sustained, or the bodily strength and dexterity, which had been employed in its defence. Then it was that mind began to assert its dominion. Then awoke the intellectual faculties, and commenced that magnificent career, which can only terminate in

the blissful abodes of eternity. Then dawned upon mankind that mental light, which served at first only to discover objects in their immediate vicinity and of necessary use, and having illustrated the humble arts, extended itself gradually, until it embraced all the comforts and luxuries of life, opened the avenues of wealth and power, developed justice, and honor, and virtue, revealed the world of nature, created the world of imagination, and, mingling with the light of revelation, disclosed the world of futurity. Happy is he, who enjoys the illumination of the present day, and, in his enquiries after truth, can avail himself of the guides of antiquity. Happier he, who, in a few centuries hence, in the increased effulgence of mind, shall look back upon this age, as a comparatively darkened spot in history. Happiest, infinitely the happiest he, whose life on earth shall be contemporaneous with the extinction of error, the conquest of crime, and the entire and cloudless victory of truth.

In the use or abuse of reason, is involved the secret of national character. Learned men long acquiesced in the opinion, that certain parts of the globe were uninhabitable by the human species. The idea is obsolete. And yet we may as justly, at least, attribute to climate the power of destroying life, as the power of defining the progress of intellect, and the sphere of happiness. Miserable, indeed, would be our situation, if the mind could be contracted by cold, or dissolved by heat; melt in a crucible, or perish in a snow-storm.

We are all the creatures and victims of education. It gives us opinions, which we are not allowed to examine, forms for us rules, which we dare not violate under the penalty of disgrace, and guides and governs the destinies of our lives. It builds the fabric of national and individual morals, and although the superstructure exhibit all the varieties of architecture, its foundation is the same, and its base is public opinion. *Public opinion!* How shall I describe that invisible guardian of honor—that eagle eyed spy on human actions—that inexorable judge of men and manners—that arbiter, whom tears cannot appease, nor ingenuity soften—and from whose terrible decisions there is no appeal? How useful! How injurious! How opposite in its tendency! The parent of greatness, the mother of misfortune! I see it, watching with parental eye over the chastity of virtue, relaxing the grasp of avarice, and melting the heart of cruelty. I see it impelling youth to fight for their country, and smothering them in death. I see it standing in the stead of religion, and enforcing it by penalties, more expeditious than its own. I see it fortify the weakness of law and

preserve the moral sanity of states. In these delightful offices, public opinion is an angel on earth, and we love and cherish, while we obey it.

Such is public opinion, when it is enlightened. Laws cannot counteract, nor legislatures repeal, nor magistrates suspend it. As powerful, but alas! How wicked is it, when, formed in ignorance, it perpetuates error, confounds the distinctions of right and wrong, degrades virtue, afflicts humanity, and with Circean arts, paints falsehood and misery, like happiness and truth.

A nation cannot be virtuous, unless it be enlightened, for it will be subject to its passions—nor independent, for freedom is never allowed to *those*, who do not know how to govern themselves—their rights are always in danger, their liberties forever on the wing—nor great, for ignorance generates selfishness. An occasional effort may, it is true, relieve the gloom which envelops it with kindred shadows. Bæotia arose with Epaminondas, only to fall with him. The mole may blunder on the light, which he had not sagacity to discover, but his place is under the earth, and he knows not who treads upon him. And did not they covet obscurity, and did not they deserve chains, those hordes of barbarians, nameless, senseless, and brutal, who aimed to restore the world to its original chaos, and succeeded so far, that they scarcely left in it light enough to write their epitaph. Let them sleep in their common grave of oblivion, those, who gained nothing from the past, and gave nothing to the future—the savage of the old, and of the new world.

Learning affords the relief, which thrusts nations forward beyond their contemporaries in historical paintings. The republics of antiquity owe their celebrity to their schools. Their youth were taught religion and patriotism, valor and virtue. Eloquence, with filial piety, ministered at the altar of liberty, and kindled on it fires, that will not soon be extinguished. Enthusiasm magnified all that was attractive in heroism, and diminished all that was terrible in danger. The ardent gaze of Greece dwelt only on glorious visions. Its mythology was the best proof of its genius, and, in the absence of a purer religion, the best guardian of its honor. The gods presided at its festivals and aided its arms in battle. Heaven contained its share of illustrious Greeks, and still there was many a vacant seat at the celestial table, to which the patriot might aspire, when bleeding for his country, and many an unappropriated star, which the sage might name, who suffered for his virtue. Is it surprising, that with such incentives the Grecian states exhibit-

ed so much wisdom in the form of their government, and so much heroism in defence of their liberties? That the arts leaped into sudden excellence, in order to run with them the race of glory? That they enjoyed such power and celebrity, that even now, when their empire is extinguished, and the grass waves in rank luxuriance over the monuments of their genius, and the trophies of their arms—even now they hold an imperishable sway over mind and sentiment; and time cannot tear them from the affections of mankind. O! delightful influence of virtue! That it should survive the ruin of empire, and extend its name, and its example, and its usefulness, through distant worlds and unborn ages! O! divine prerogative of mind! That it should transmit its features, and its form in unsullied freshness, and obtain for itself an immortality on earth!

If such be the influence of learning, it should be universally disseminated. The character of a nation is the character of the individuals, who compose it; and, when I consider, what an indissoluble connexion allies the mind, and the heart; the understanding and the passions of men—how ignorance induces idleness, and with idleness, dissipation, and with dissipation ignominious crimes—how it facilitates the progress of intrigue and corruption, I cannot but regard it as the greatest curse, that ever afflicted a people, that its children should not be educated, because their parents are poor.

Intellect, sweeter than the sweetest wild-flower, grows wild throughout the desert. It is a plant, that loves to encounter the difficulties of life, and was intended to overcome them. There, where the atmosphere is cold, and the hand of cultivation hath never been—watered only by the dews of heaven, it blooms, and bursts on the eye of the traveller with sad luxuriance; and he mingles with the breeze a sigh for its neglect. Now if there be a deed, acceptable in the eyes of God and man, if there be a time when the rulers of a state may confidently implore and expect the benedictions of heaven, it is when, rescuing from cold and obscurity the seeds of intelligence and virtue, they warm them into life, by the rays of benevolence, and place them in a genial soil, where they may expand into usefulness, and adorn, like the acanthus, the columns of the state.

In support of a bad government, or a false religion, it is customary and politic, to guard the avenues of knowledge from the vulgar eye. Those, who could bury innocence and beauty in a convent, were well pleased with burying learning in a cloister. But, if investigation be the poison of despots, it is

the life blood of republics, and free governments. The eagle is the bird of light, as well as of liberty. Her bold wing, and towering flight, her steadfast eye, gazing on the fires of heaven, image the powers and progress of the mind, that nothing earthly can restrain or satisfy. If we, in this country, should create obstacles to the pursuit of knowledge, if we should confine the facilities of information to the little aristocracy that wealth produces, we should, in order to preserve our consistency, banish the eagle from our arms, and substitute the owl, the emblem of darkness and desolation.

The moral is more easily moved, than the physical world ; and the political Archimedes needs only a mass of ignorance, on which to rest his lever. Thanks to the fathers of New-England, he cannot find it here. Well did they foresee and appreciate the connexion between religion and letters, and when they erected a temple to the Almighty, in which they might learn his will, they placed at its side another, where they might study his works. Piety flourished in one—virtue in the other, and liberty was the offspring of both. It was not in vain, that in that venerable university,* the wise and good men of antiquity were embalmed and preserved, for praise and imitation. It was not in vain, that the youth of every hamlet were taught to regard themselves as children of the state—that they were removed from the bosom of their natural mother, to the bosom of learning, where they imbibed the streams of moral life. Such were the institutions, which made New-England the cradle of Independence, and will make her the Athens of America.

To speak of religion as a natural characteristic, might be deemed by some, only to trace the operation of a common principle. I know, it is true, only of one nation, and that was revolutionary France, which regarded religion as a prejudice that ought to be overcome, and broke its altars into fragments. But I know not, whether piety ought to grieve, that she was not allowed to witness the scenes of horror, which followed her exile ; and it was perhaps a tribute to the Almighty, to deprecate his sanction in their atrocious career.

Religion is indeed universal, but the objects and the modes of worship so differ—there is so much absurdity in some, and so much bigotry in others—here so much purity, and there so much pride—now flourishing on every tree, and then condemned to a single stalk—that its religious institutions enter into the character, and define, in a measure, the manners of a nation.

* Harvard College.

Now these will be subjects of praise, and sources of power, only in proportion as they are enlightened. Every wise man is religious, but every religious man is not wise. Fanaticism with all its train of misery and crime, its unmanly fears, and preternatural visions, is the result of religion, acting upon ignorance. But to an enlightened people it imparts a sublime energy, it protects virtuous governments, preserves social order, and infuses hope and consolation in disaster and defeat. When human means fail, man begins to rely on the Almighty. This is the period of union, when local prejudices vanish, when sordid appetites are forgotten, and an overwhelming interest absorbs in a single idea, all our hopes and sensibilities. Then it is, that we achieve exploits, so divested of selfishness, that they appear to have been done for all mankind. It is then that martyrs and heroes arise, to redeem the character of an age. Hence the unconquerable spirit, which the Roman emperor encountered in the siege of Jerusalem. Few of its defenders lived to know, that the Almighty had abandoned them, and the conqueror, pausing among the hecatombs of slain, wondered at the zeal and self-devotion, which signalized the worship of an invisible God.

Such a crisis exposes the weakness, and wickedness of religious intolerance. Misfortune disarms bigotry. It breaks the rod of the oppressor and teaches him wisdom. In the commotions of a tempest, tyrants tremble as well as slaves.

In the glorious struggle for the liberty of the peninsula, the inquisition fell. It fled, like a coward—having released its victims, and abandoned its polluted feasts. It took refuge with the monarch, and was concealed under his crown. It entwined itself around his heart, like the serpent around Laocoon, and murdered all the family of his affections. It lay hushed in "grim repose," until the contest was over—it waited until the brave had put off armour, and the innocent had put off suspicion—until the national aspect began to wear the smile of gladness—when it came to darken that countenance as with a pall—to afflict innocence with savage torture, and reward valor with chains and exile. What a profanation of the name of christianity, to apply it to the cruel dominion of bloody persecution. What an insult to the God of light and goodness, to anathematize knowledge, and freedom, and virtue, to aim at the extinction of that light, which he munificently created, and to perpetrate, in his name, crimes, to which he has affixed his curse.

Seeing what a moral engine religion affords in wielding

human destinies, nothing should be allowed to embarrass its operations. To oppose one mode of worship to another, would be to destroy the unity of action ; and to be content with one, among a variety of powers, would be to abandon the remainder, and to be studiously imbecile. From christianity, we learn that lesson of religious equality, which was imperfectly understood by the Roman heathen. It is one of the grand and original sources of the prosperity of this country.

If there were but a single ocean, Burke could not have passed his eloquent eulogium on American enterprise. If but one stream flowed through this immense continent, and the channels of the others were dry, as the ancient aqueducts, we should still have before us, centuries which we have passed in wealth and civilization. We would declare war with the nation, that should interdict to us the use of waters which convey commerce between man and man. Religion, on the streams, with which it feeds and fertilizes the deserts of life, sustains the intercourse between man and God. Who shall dare deny the Almighty the homage of his creatures ? It will, it must ascend, as various and as universal as the blessings of heaven. To tolerate only one religious sect, would be as cruel, as to condemn the Arab, parching under his canopy of fire, to a solitary fountain, placed, peradventure, beyond his reach, or brackish and unwholesome.

The attempt to tyrannize over conscience has succeeded as it ought—it has produced disaffection, where it hoped for pro-selytes—and has strengthened the doctrines, it endeavored to destroy. It weakens the power, and impoverishes the resources of the nation which adopts it. The expulsion of the Huguenots, while it disgraced the reign of Lewis the XIV. carried into foreign countries the artizans of France. Spain, in the exile of the Moors, shewed as little gratitude as policy—and Great Britain, in closing the avenues of honor to her catholic subjects, condescends to accept of them services, which she is unwilling to repay. Look at the car of victory, which has borne her over continental Europe, and you will find the leaders, chafed, and galled, and dying in the harness, loyal amid their sufferings, and carrying their oppressors in safety and in triumph. Let the nations of the old world continue, if they will, the hopeless experiment of reducing mankind to a single opinion ; let them, if they can, deny the liberty of thought as well as of speech, and when, one after another, all the rights of man have been broken down and destroyed, they will find themselves equally distant from the object of their wishes ; they will have made deserters through corruption,

and hypocrites through fear ; but the honest will have been roused into rebellion, or driven into exile.

Why is it that this country is peopled with unfortunate foreigners, and the illustrious sufferers of persecution seek our shores ? Why do they desert the land of the vine and the olive, for the uninhabited wilderness of the west ? Why from the mountains of Switzerland, and the plains of Bavaria, and the fields of Erin, as with one consent, do they come hither, stifling the tear for that which they leave, in the hope of that, which they are to enjoy ? It is not for a richer soil, nor a more genial climate, nor for the courtesies or luxuries of life, that they sojourn among us. There is nothing to tempt them in the rocks of New-England, and too much to dread in the swamps of Carolina. It is not for our society that they come. We are too much in the ore to be polished, and those who have adorned the camp and the court, are choosing their abitations among our beasts and savages.

No ! It was the picture of trans-atlantic happiness, which was revealed to them, in the darkness of affliction and servitude—and their pilgrimage was lighted by the western star, hovering over the cradle of liberty. They came, because of our free institutions, our civil and political rights, our religious equality, and our republican form of government, all of which have their origin, and may be resolved into our intelligence. Knowledge is power, knowledge is liberty, knowledge is fame. They will see here no artificial distinctions of society, throwing virtue into the shade and exalting vice into undeserved celebrity. They will find, it is true, a monarchy, but it is the monarchy of virtue—an aristocracy, but it is the aristocracy of talents—and a democracy, happy and enlightened. We have all the same rights—we have all the same hopes—we all love each other, and our country. How much national pride should we feel, in being, even in this early part of our history, the political model of mankind. What a delightful spectacle, to see the old world, venerable and decrepid, leaning on the youthful stature of the new, and, like the aged Roman, deriving sustenance from the bosom of its offspring.

Nations were formerly distinguished in the scale of civilization, by the influence, which was possessed by the fair sex. In the days of chivalry the female character redeemed an age of darkness and ferocity by the moonlight softness of its charms. When laws were impotent, and manners rude, it stood in the stead of these salutary restraints, polished society into gentleness, moulded it into order, and warmed it into the devotion, which is due to beauty. The savage was reclaimed and the

civilized are obedient. Beauty governs without an effort the empire of manners, and yokes in silken fetters the lion with the lamb. The free ought to be brave, and the brave are always courteous.

Forms of government are rather the effects, then the causes of national character. From the political wardrobe every people suits itself. Those who are enlightened, will use none but their own manufacture. They will choose such a government as they can wear with ease, and support, like the air, without feeling it. In the tainted gale they will scent the approach of tyranny. They will carry into despotisms the spirit of revolution and into all governments the spirit of inquiry ; and it will be as impossible to quench their intelligence, as to conceal ACHILLES in a woman's garb.

From their free institutions, arises the only pure and lofty patriotism of nations. The love of country, resulting from local attachment, is common to mankind. It is that species of patriotism, which we share in common with the animal creation and vegetable world. Every man loves the place of his nativity, but the feelings, which it excites in his bosom, are in the ratio of the blessings it affords him. Patriotism should not be confounded with loyalty. The latter is the tribute, which is paid to rulers, by subjects who dread revolution. The former is the spontaneous devotion with which freemen regard the source of all their enjoyments. What a holy obligation does it impose ! It is written in the milk of our mother's bosom—its record is the heart—its witness is the memory—and all the charities of life seal and confirm it. Patriotism and loyalty are often in opposition. It was patriotism that restored FERDINAND to his throne, but alas ! It is not patriotism that keeps him there. It is only when they concur, that despotic governments exhibit greatness or heroism.

They were happily blended in that most signal act of magnanimity, that most eventful achievement of this most eventful age, when Russia voluntarily consigned to destruction, the wealth and grandeur of her capital, the cradles where her infants slumbered, and the tombs where their ancestors reposed. Then it was, that but one heart beat through that immense empire—then it was, that a whole nation appeared as a single individual, appealing to the throne of the eternal, from the ruins of earthly greatness.

O ! bright was the flame, to which Moscow was given,

Unstain'd by the foot of the foe ;

Like the soul of a virgin, ascending to heaven,

To escape from pollution below !

In a tyranny, reflection crushes loyalty, in a republic it enlighens patriotism. The civil and political institutions of a country relieve its barrenness—consecrate its rocks—and rally in its defence all the powers of action.

How much of the soil of New-England is desolate ! To how many of its inhabitants does it deny sustenance, compelling them to seek it in the more friendly ocean ? Yet it would be vain to tempt them with the cloudless sky of Italy, with waters unembarrassed with ice, or lands not afflicted with barrenness. They will adhere to a soil where the little it yields them is their own—where no palace eclipses the cottage in its shadow—and no hereditary distinctions christen man before he is born with titles, which he seldom lives long enough to deserve. They will adhere to a government, with which they identify themselves—and in the firmness, with which they oppose the obstacles of nature, will attain the heights of moral greatness.

How romantic is the idea, which is gaining proselytes, of exporting the people of this country, and colonizing the land of Dido, with the black gentlemen of the United States ! They will not voluntarily abandon their rights. If they are fools enough to go, they are not worthy to be sent. Other nations may be doomed like CAIR to wander, but the American who deserts his country, sins without temptation and without excuse.

Gentlemen of the Phi Beta Kappa Society. When, in connexion with the pleasure of re-visiting, after a long interval, the scenes of my boyhood, and the land of my ancestors, I contemplated the danger and difficulty of addressing this fraternity of scholars and critics, I shrunk intuitively from a feast, where the sword of Damocles was suspended over me. Political pursuits had estranged me from the path of letters ; and to recal me was only to shew how far I had wandered. But I knew that I could rely on the hospitality of Massachusetts—I thought that I could rely on the hospitality of letters—and rescuing something from indolence, and something from ambition, I came, with the feelings of the prodigal son, to ask forgiveness of the muses.

And I wish that I had not been afflicted with a more melancholy errand. It was my misfortune to apprise his relatives of the death of one of our brethren,* who, not many years since in this place, so much more appropriate for himself than me, addressed and delighted you. I need not name him, who was

* The Rev. Theodore Dehon, bishop of the diocese of S. Carolina.

distinguished in yonder seminary for his early talents and virtues ; and who employed the learning he there acquired, in the service of religion, in reclaiming the sinful, in confirming the pious, in convincing the sceptical, and in soothing the mourner. I need not name that pure and spotless man, whose example illustrated all the precepts he so eloquently uttered. Cut down in the midst of his days, from the object of universal love, he has become, alas ! the object of universal lamentation.

He sleeps by his own request, under the altar, where he ministered,—in death, as in life, adhering to the church. The sun shines not on his grave, nor is it wet with the morning or the evening dew. But innocence kneels upon it—purity bathes it in tears, and the recollections of the sleeping saint mingle with the praises of the living God. Oh ! how dangerous it is to be eminent. The oak, whose roots descend to the world below, while its summit towers to the world above, falls with its giant branches, the victim of the storm. The osier shakes—and bends—and totters—and rises, and triumphs in obscurity. And yet, who of you would owe his safety to his insignificance ?

Beneath that living osier not an insect can escape the sun. Beneath that fallen oak the vegetable world was wont to flourish—the ivy clung around its trunk—the birds built their nests among its branches, and from its summit saw and welcomed the morning sun—the beasts fled to it for refuge from the tempest—and man himself was refreshed in its shade, and learned from its fruit the laws of nature. Oh ! how delightful it is to be eminent ! To win the race of usefulness—to live in the beams of well earned praise—and walk in the zodiac among the stars.

Fame, with its perils and delights, my brothers, must be ours. Welcome its rocky precipice ! Welcome its amaranthine garlands ! We must wear them on our brow—we must leave them on our grave. We must, we will, fill our lives with acts of usefulness and crown them with deeds of honor. And when we die, there will be tears on the cheek of innocence—and sighs from the bosom of virtue, and the young will wish to resemble, and the aged will lament to lose us.



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In the infancy of society, mankind must have borne an uniform aspect. Where the soil was fertile and the climate genial, the shepherd fed his flocks. Where the barrenness of nature precluded this occupation, the hunter sought in the chase the means of subsistence. On both, were stamped the same rude features of barbarous life. Both were savages. Free from the influence of moral causes, with just enough of light for self preservation, they felt and illustrated the effects of climate; without the desire or ability to overcome them. Strangers to civilization, they were destitute of manners, and exhibited a promiscuous, and spontaneous growth of virtues and vices, the first without cultivation, and the last without restraint.

As men became opulent, laws were instituted for their protection, in the formation of which, something more was requisite, than the rustick arts, by which life had been sustained, or the bodily strength and dexterity, which had been employed in its defence. Then it was that mind began to assert its dominion. Then awoke the intellectual faculties, and commenced that magnificent career, which can only terminate in the blissful abodes of eternity. Then dawned upon mankind that mental light, which served at first only to discover objects in their immediate vicinity and of necessary use, and having illustrated the humble acts, extended itself gradually, until it embraced all the comforts and luxuries of life, opened the avenues of wealth and power, developed justice, and honour, and virtue, revealed the world of nature, created the world of imagination, and, mingling with the light of revelation, disclosed the world of futurity. Happy is he, who enjoys the illumination of the present day, and, in his inquiries after truth, can avail himself of the guides of antiquity. Happier he, who, a few centuries hence, in the increased effulgence of mind, shall look back upon this age, as a comparatively darkened spot in history. Happiest, infinitely the happiest he, whose life on earth shall be contemporaneous with the extinction of error, the conquest of crime, and the entire and cloudless victory of truth.

In the use or abuse of reason, is involved the secret of national character. Learned men long acquiesced in the opinion, that certain parts of the globe were uninhabitable by the human species. The idea is obsolete. And yet we may as justly, at least, attribute to climate the power of destroying life, as the power of defining the progress of intellect, and the sphere of happiness. Miserable, indeed, would be our situation, if the mind could be contracted by cold, or dissolved by heat; melt in a crucible, or perish in a snow-storm.

We are all the creatures and victims of education. It gives us opinions, which we are not allowed to examine, forms for us rules, which we dare not violate under the penalty of disgrace, and guides and governs the destinies of our lives. It builds the fabrick of national and individual morals, and although the superstructure exhibit all the varieties of architecture, its foundation is the same, and its base is publick opinion. *Publick opinion!* How shall I describe that

invisible guardian of honour—that eagle eyed spy on human actions—that inexorable judge of men and manners—that arbiter, whom tears cannot appease, nor ingenuity soften—and from whose terrible decisions there is no appeal? How useful! how injurious! How opposite in its tendency! The parent of greatness, the mother of misfortune! I see it, watching with parental eye over the chastity of virtue, relaxing the grasp of avarice, and melting the heart of cruelty. I see it impelling youth to fight for their country, and soothing them in death. I see it standing in the stead of religion, and enforcing it by penalties, more expeditious than its own. I see it fortify the weakness of law, and preserve the moral sanity of states. In these delightful offices, publick opinion is an angel on earth, and we love and cherish, while we obey it.

Such is publick opinion, when it is enlightened. Laws cannot counteract, nor legislatures repeal, nor magistrates suspend it. As powerful, but alas! how wicked is it, when, formed in ignorance, it perpetuates error, confounds the distinctions of right and wrong, degrades virtue, afflicts humanity, and with Circean arts, paints falsehood and misery, like happiness and truth.

A nation cannot be virtuous, unless it be enlightened, for it will be subject to its passions,—nor independent, for freedom is never allowed to *those*, who do not know how to govern themselves—their rights are always in danger, their liberties forever on the wing—nor great, for ignorance generates selfishness. An occasional effort may, it is true, relieve the gloom which envelops it with kindred shadows. Bœotia arose with Epaminondas, only to fall with him. The mole may blunder on the light, which he had not sagacity to discover, but his place is under the earth, and he knows not who treads upon him. And did not they covet obscurity, and did not they deserve chains, those hordes of barbarians, nameless, senseless, and brutal, who aimed to restore the world to its original chaos, and succeeded so far, that they scarcely left in it light enough to write their epitaph. Let them sleep in the common grave of oblivion, those, who gained nothing from the past, and gave nothing to the future—the savage of the old, and of the new world.

Learning affords the relief, which thrusts nations forward beyond their contemporaries in historical paintings. The

republicks of antiquity owe their celebrity to their schools. Their youth were taught religion and patriotism, valour and virtue. Eloquence, with filial piety, ministered at the altar of liberty, and kindled on it fires, that will not soon be extinguished. Enthusiasm magnified all that was attractive in heroism, and diminished all that was terrible in danger. The ardent gaze of Greece dwelt only on glorious visions. Its mythology was the best proof of its genius, and, in the absence of a purer religion, the best guardian of its honour. The gods presided at its festivals and aided its arms in battle. Heaven contained its share of illustrious Greeks, and still there was many a vacant seat at the celestial table, to which the patriot might aspire, when bleeding for his country, and many an unappropriated star, which the sage might name, who suffered for his virtue. Is it surprising, that with such incentives the Grecian states exhibited so much wisdom in the form of their government, and so much heroism in defence of their liberties? That the arts leaped into sudden excellence in order to run with them the race of glory? That they enjoyed such power and celebrity, that even now, when their empire is extinguished, and the grass waves in rank luxuriance over the monuments of their genius, and the trophies of their arms—even now they hold an imperishable sway over mind and sentiment; and time cannot tear them from the affections of mankind. O! delightful influence of virtue! that it should survive the ruin of empire, and extend its name, and its example, and its usefulness, through distant worlds and unborn ages! O! divine prerogative of mind! that it should transmit its features, and its form in unsullied freshness, and obtain for itself an immortality on earth!

If such be the influence of learning, it should be universally disseminated. The character of a nation is the character of the individuals, who compose it; and, when I consider, what an indissoluble connexion allies the mind, and the heart; the understanding and the passions of men—how ignorance induces idleness, and with idleness, dissipation, and with dissipation ignominious crimes—how it facilitates the progress of intrigue and corruption, I cannot but regard it as the greatest curse, that ever afflicted a people, that its children should not be educated, because their parents are poor.

Intellect, sweeter than the sweetest wild-flower, grows wild throughout the desert. It is a plant, that loves to encounter the difficulties of life, and was intended to overcome them. There, where the atmosphere is cold, and the hand of cultivation hath never been—watered only by the dews of heaven, it blooms, and bursts on the eye of the traveller with sad luxuriance; and he mingles with the breeze a sigh for its neglect. Now if there be a deed, acceptable in the eyes of God and man, if there be a time when the rulers of a state may confidently implore and expect the benedictions of heaven, it is when, rescuing from cold and obscurity the seeds of intelligence and virtue, they warm them into life, by the rays of benevolence, and place them in a genial soil, where they may expand into usefulness, and adorn, like the acanthus, the columns of the state.

In support of a bad government, or a false religion, it is customary and politick, to guard the avenues of knowledge from the vulgar eye. Those, who could bury innocence and beauty in a convent, were well pleased with burying learning in a cloister. But, if investigation be the poison of despots, it is the life blood of republicks. and free governments. The eagle is the bird of light, as well as of liberty. Her bold wing, and towering flight, her stedfast eye, gazing on the fires of heaven, image the powers and progress of the mind, that nothing earthly can restrain or satisfy. If we, in this country, should create obstacles to the pursuit of knowledge, if we should confine the facilities of information to the little aristocracy that wealth produces, we should, in order to preserve our consistency, banish the eagle from our arms, and substitute the owl, the emblem of darkness and desolation.

The moral is more easily moved, than the physical world; and the political Archimedes needs only a mass of ignorance, on which to rest his lever. Thanks to the fathers of New England, he cannot find it here. Well did they foresee and appreciate the connexion between religion and letters, and when they erected a temple to the Almighty, in which they might learn his will, they placed at its side another, where they might study his works. Piety flourished in one—virtue in the other,—and liberty was the offspring of both. It was not in vain, that in that venerable university,* the wise and

* Harvard College.

good men of antiquity were embalmed and preserved, for praise and imitation. It was not in vain, that the youth of every hamlet were taught to regard themselves as children of the state—that they were removed from the bosom of their natural mother, to the bosom of learning, where they imbibed the streams of moral life. Such were the institutions, which made New England the cradle of independence, and will make her the Athens of America.

To speak of religion as a national characteristic, might be deemed by some, only to trace the operation of a common principle. I know, it is true, only of one nation, and that was revolutionary France, which regarded religion as a prejudice that ought to be overcome, and broke its altars into fragments. But I know not, whether piety ought to grieve, that she was not allowed to witness the scenes of horror, which followed her exile; and it was perhaps a tribute to the Almighty, to depreciate his sanction in their atrocious career.

Religion is indeed universal, but the objects and the modes of worship so differ—there is so much absurdity in some, and so much bigotry in others—here so much purity, and there so much pride—now flourishing on every tree, and then condemned to a single stalk,—that its religious institutions enter into the character, and define, in a measure, the manners of a nation. Now these will be subjects of praise, and sources of power, only in proportion as they are enlightened. Every wise man is religious, but every religious man is not wise. Fanaticism with all its train of misery and crime, its unmanly fears, and preternatural visions, is the result of religion, acting upon ignorance. But to an enlightened people it imparts a sublime energy, it protects virtuous governments, preserves social order, and infuses hope and consolation in disaster and defeat. When human means fail, man begins to rely on the Almighty. This is the period of union, when local prejudices vanish, when sordid appetites are forgotten, and an overwhelming interest absorbs in a single idea, all our hopes and sensibilities. Then it is, that we achieve exploits, so divested of selfishness, that they appear to have been done for all mankind. It is then, that martyrs and heroes arise, to redeem the character of an age. Hence the unconquerable spirit, which the Roman emperor encountered in the siege of Jerusalem. Few of its defenders lived to

know, that the Almighty had abandoned them, and the conqueror, pausing among the hecatombs of slain, wondered at the zeal and self-devotion, which signalized the worship of an invisible God.

Such a crisis exposes the weakness, and the wickedness of religious intolerance. Misfortune disarms bigotry. It breaks the rod of the oppressor and teaches him wisdom. In the commotions of a tempest, tyrants tremble as well as slaves.

In the glorious struggle for the liberty of the peninsula, the inquisition fell. It fled, like a coward—having released its victims, and abandoned its polluted feasts. It took refuge with the monarch, and was concealed under his crown. It entwined itself around his heart, like the serpent around Laocoon, and murdered all the family of his affections. It lay hushed in ‘grim repose,’ until the contest was over—it waited until the brave had put off armour, and the innocent had put off suspicion—until the national aspect began to wear the smile of gladness—when it came to darken that countenance as with a pall—to afflict innocence with savage torture, and reward valour with chains and exile. What a profanation of the name of christianity, to apply it to the cruel dominion of bloody persecution. What an insult to the God of light and goodness, to anathematize knowledge, and freedom, and virtue, to aim at the extinction of that light, which he munificently created, and to perpetrate, in his name, crimes, to which he has affixed his curse.

Seeing what a moral engine religion affords in wielding human destinies, nothing should be allowed to embarrass its operations. To oppose one mode of worship to another, would be to destroy the unity of action; and to be content with one, among a variety of powers, would be to abandon the remainder, and to be studiously imbecile. From christianity, we learn that lesson of religious equality, which was imperfectly understood by the Roman heathen. It is one of the grand and original sources of the prosperity of this country.

If there were but a single ocean, Burke could not have passed his eloquent eulogium on American enterprise. If but one stream flowed through this immense continent, and the channels of the others were dry, as the ancient aqueducts, we should still have before us, centuries which we have

passed in wealth and civilization. We would declare war with the nation, that should interdict to us the use of waters which convey commerce between man and man. Religion, on the streams, with which it feeds and fertilizes the deserts of life, sustains the intercourse between man and God. Who shall dare deny the Almighty the homage of his creatures? It will, it must ascend, as various and as universal as the blessings of heaven. To tolerate only one religious sect, would be as cruel, as to condemn the Arab, parching under the canopy of fire, to a solitary fountain, placed, peradventure, beyond his reach, or brackish and unwholesome.

The attempt to tyrannize over conscience has succeeded as it ought—it has produced disaffection, where it hoped for proselytes—and has strenghtened the doctrines, it endeavoured to destroy. It weakens the power, and impoverishes the resources of the nation which adopts it. The expulsion of the Huguenots, while it disgraced the reign of Lewis the XIV. carried into foreign countries the artizans of France. Spain in the exile of the Moors, shewed as little gratitude as policy—and Great Britain, in closing the avenues of honour to her catholick subjects, condescends to accept of them services, which she is unwilling to repay. Look at the car of victory, which has borne her over continental Europe, and you will find the leaders, chafed, and galled, and dying in the harness, loyal amid their sufferings, and carrying their oppressors in safety and in triumph. Let the nations of the old world continue, if they will, the hopeless experiment of reducing mankind to a single opinion; let them, if they can, deny the liberty of thought as well as of speech, and when, one after another, all the rights of man have been broken down and destroyed, they will find themselves equally distant from the object of their wishes; they will have made deserters through corruption, and hypocrites through fear; but the honest will have been roused into rebellion, or driven into exile.

Why is it that this country is peopled with unfortunate foreigners, and the illustrious sufferers of persecution seek our shores? Why do they desert the land of the vine and the olive, for the uninhabited wilderness of the west? Why from the mountains of Switzerland, and the plains of Bavaria, and the fields of Erin, as with one consent, do they come hither, stifling the tear for that which they leave, in the hope

of that, which they are to enjoy? It is not for a richer soil, nor a more genial climate, nor for the courtesies or luxuries of life, that they sojourn among us. There is nothing to tempt them in the rocks of New England, and too much to dread in the swamps of Carolina. It is not for our society that they come. We are too much in the ore to be polished, and those who have adorned the camp and the court, are choosing their habitations among our beasts and savages.

No! it was the picture of trans-atlantick happiness, which was revealed to them, in the darkness of affliction and servitude—and their pilgrimage was lighted by the western star, hovering over the cradle of liberty. They came, because of our free institutions, our civil and political rights, our religious equality, and our republican form of government, all of which have their origin, and may be resolved into our intelligence. Knowledge is power, knowledge is liberty, knowledge is fame. They will see here no artificial distinctions of society, throwing virtue into the shade and exalting vice into undeserved celebrity. They will find, it is true, a monarchy, but it is the monarchy of virtue—an aristocracy, but it is the aristocracy of talents,—and a democracy, happy and enlightened. We have all the same rights—we have all the same hopes,—we all love each other, and our country. How much national pride should we feel, in being, even in this early part of our history, the political model of mankind. What a delightful spectacle, to see the old world, venerable and decrepid, leaning on the youthful stature of the new, and, like the aged Roman, deriving sustenance from the bosom of its offspring.

Nations were formerly distinguished in the scale of civilization, by the influence, which was possessed by the fair sex. In the days of chivalry the female character redeemed an age of darkness and ferocity by the moonlight softness of its charms. When laws were impotent, and manners rude, it stood in the stead of these salutary restraints, polished society into gentleness, moulded it into order, and warmed it into the devotion, which is due to beauty. The savage was reclaimed and the civilized are obedient. Beauty governs without an effort the empire of manners, and yokes in silken fetters the lion with the lamb. The free ought to be brave, and the brave are always courteous.

Forms of government are rather the effects, than the causes of national character. From the political wardrobe every people suits itself. Those who are enlightened, will use none but their own manufacture. They will choose such a government as they can wear with ease, and support, like the air, without feeling it. In the tainted gale they will scent the approach of tyranny. They will carry into despotisms the spirit of revolution and into all governments the spirit of inquiry; and it will be as impossible to quench their intelligence, as to conceal ACHILLES in a woman's garb.

From their free institutions, arises the only pure and lofty patriotism of nations. The love of country, resulting from local attachment, is common to mankind. It is that species of patriotism, which we share in common with the animal creation and vegetable world. Every man loves the place of his nativity, but the feelings, which it excites in his bosom, are in the ratio of the blessings it affords him. Patriotism should not be confounded with loyalty. The latter is the tribute, which is paid to rulers, by subjects who dread revolution. The former is the spontaneous devotion with which freemen regard the source of all their enjoyments. What a holy obligation does it impose! It is written in the milk of our mother's bosoms—its record is the heart—its witness is the memory—and all the charities of life seal and confirm it. Patriotism and loyalty are often in opposition. It was patriotism that restored FERDINAND to his throne, but alas! it is not patriotism that keeps him there. It is only when they concur, that despotick governments exhibit greatness or heroism.

They were happily blended in that most signal act of magnanimity, that most eventful achievement of this most eventful age, when Russia voluntarily consigned to destruction, the wealth and grandeur of her capital, the cradles where her infants slumbered, and the tombs where their ancestors reposed. Then it was, that but one heart beat through that immense empire—then it was, that a whole nation appeared as a single individual, appealing to the throne of the eternal, from the ruins of earthly greatness.

O! bright was the flame, to which Moscow was given,

Unstain'd by the foot of the foe;

Like the soul of a virgin, ascending to heaven,

To escape from pollution below!

In a tyranny, reflection crushes loyalty, in a republick it enlightens patriotism. The civil and political institutions of a country relieve its barrenness—consecrate its rocks—and rally in its defence all the powers of action.

How much of the soil of New England is desolate ! to how many of its inhabitants does it deny sustenance, compelling them to seek it in the more friendly ocean ? Yet it would be vain to tempt them with the cloudless sky of Italy, with waters unembarrassed with ice, or lands not afflicted with barrenness. They will adhere to a soil where the little it yields them is their own—where no palace eclipses the cottage in its shadow—and no hereditary distinctions christen man before he is born with titles, which he seldom lives long enough to deserve. They will adhere to a government, with which they identify themselves—and in the firmness, with which they oppose the obstacles of nature, will attain the heights of moral greatness.

How romantick is the idea, which is gaining proselytes, of exporting the people of this country, and colonizing the land of Dido, with the black gentlemen of the United States ! They will not voluntarily abandon their rights. If they are fools enough to go, they are not worthy to be sent. Other nations may be doomed like CAIN to wander, but the American who deserts his country sins without temptation and without excuse.

Gentlemen of the Phi Beta Kappa Society.—When, in connexion with the pleasure of re-visiting, after a long interval, the scenes of my boyhood, and the land of my ancestors, I contemplated the danger and difficulty of addressing this fraternity of scholars and criticks, I shrank intuitively from a feast, where the sword of Damocles was suspended over me. Political pursuits had estranged me from the path of letters ; and to recal me was only to shew how far I had wandered. But I knew that I could rely on the hospitality of Massachusetts,—I thought that I could rely on the hospitality of letters—and rescuing something from indolence, and something from ambition, I came, with the feelings of the prodigal son, to ask forgiveness of the muses.

And I wish that I had not been afflicted with a more melancholy errand. It was my misfortune to apprize his

relatives of the death of one of our brethren,* who, not many years since in this place, so much more appropriate for himself than me, addressed and delighted you. I need not name him, who was distinguished in yonder seminary for his early talents and virtues ; and who employed the learning he there acquired, in the service of religion, in reclaiming the sinful, in confirming the pious, in convincing the sceptical, and in soothing the mourner. I need not name that pure and spotless man, whose example illustrated all the precepts he so eloquently uttered. Cut down in the midst of his days, from the object of universal love, he has become, alas ! the object of universal lamentation.

He sleeps by his own request, under the altar, where he ministered,—in life, as in death, adhering to the church. The sun shines not on his grave, nor is it wet with the morning or the evening dew. But innocence kneels upon it—purity bathes it in tears,—and the recollections of the sleeping saint mingle with the praises of the living God. Oh ! how dangerous it is to be eminent. The oak, whose roots descend to the world below, while its summit towers to the world above, falls with its giant branches, the victim of the storm. The osier shakes—and bends—and totters—and rises, and triumphs in obscurity. And yet, who of you would owe his safety to his insignificance ?

Beneath that living osier not an insect can escape the sun. Beneath that fallen oak the vegetable world was wont to flourish—the ivy clung around its trunk—the birds built their nests among its branches, and from its summit saw and welcomed the morning sun,—the beasts fled to it for refuge from the tempest—and man himself was refreshed in its shade, and learned from its fruit the laws of nature. Oh ! how delightful it is to be eminent ! To win the race of usefulness—to live in the beams of well earned praise,—and walk in the zodiack among the stars.

Fame, with its perils and delights, my brothers, must be ours. Welcome its rocky precipice ! Welcome its amaranthine garlands ! We must wear them on our brow,—we must leave them on our grave. We must, we will, fill our lives with acts of usefulness and crown them with deeds of

* The Rev. Theodore Dehon, bishop of the diocese of South Carolina.

honour. And when we die, there will be tears on the cheek of innocence—and sighs from the bosom of virtue, and the young will wish to resemble, and the aged will lament to lose us.